

THE ORCHESTRATION OF CRISIS

Blueprint of the Communist success secret: the technique of protracted conflict **by COLONEL WILLIAM R. KINTNER**



Colonel William R. Kintner is a member of that small but increasing group of military men who are both scholars and combat soldiers. A graduate of West Point, with a Ph.D. from Georgetown University in International Relations, he commanded an artillery battalion in World War II and an infantry battalion in Korea. Since the end of the Korean conflict he has been head of the Plans Division of the Korean Armistice Commission, has served with Intelligence staffs, the National Security Council, worked on the

political and psychological aspects of planning on the staff of Nelson Rockefeller when he was special assistant to the President, was connected with the Operations Research office of Johns Hopkins University. He is the author of two books, *The Front Is Everywhere* and *Forging a New Sword*, and is co-author of *Atomic Weapons in Hand Combat*. At present he spends half his time on the operations directorate of the Army General Staff in Washington, and the other half working on an important project at the University of Pennsylvania. *Esquire's* article stems from a study undertaken by the Foreign Policy Research Institute at the University of Pennsylvania; it will be one of the four parts of the book, *Protracted Conflict*, to be published in May by Harper & Brothers.

THE master plans for world conquest have often depended to a great extent on the inertia and ignorance of the proposed victims. Ironically enough, many of these plans, even those as recent as Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and the Japanese *Tanaka Memorial*, were available to the ignorant well in advance of the onslaught. And though advanced students at Moscow's Lenin School of Strategic Studies are not allowed to take notes from their classes, the master plan of Communist strategy is clear, too, for anyone willing to study and analyze not only the blatant Communist record of aggrandizement, but also the published writings of Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tse-tung. To one who understands the Communist formula, the seemingly disparate crises of the past year—Lebanon, Iraq, Quemoy and, most currently, Berlin—become interlocking parts of an over-all pattern of conflict with but a single purpose: to destroy the Western World and make Communist totalitarianism supreme everywhere.

For ten years my colleagues and I have studied this Communist plan for world conquest. We are not only sure that this all-pervasive strategy exists and is their basic secret of success; more than that, we are convinced of the great urgency of both understanding and acting against it. The tempo of aggression accelerates as the Communist arsenal of nuclear weapons and guided missiles grows. The threat of utter annihilation is becoming the principal gambit in an unending war of attrition. We are in the whirlwind.

The Communist plan is the strategy of protracted conflict. A hard look at protracted conflict—at its meaning, at its historical development, at the many ways it is currently used against us to forward the aims of a relentless enemy—might provide us with a key for survival.

The term "protracted conflict" was first used by Mao Tse-tung, whose recent retirement as active head of the Red Chinese Government should not be construed as a sign of the diminution either of his enormous political power or his deserved reputation as one of the most important strategic thinkers of modern times. Mao's term aptly describes the multi-front, multi-weapons nature of Communist operations. Most generally, it is, by its very name, a method of conflict whereby weaker powers, in time, gain the strength necessary to overcome stronger ones. This strength is gained not only through

warfare—which is often, in fact, a last resort—but through other, subtler means of conflict as well: political, economic and even psychological. It is a method requiring infinite patience; the purpose of each action, military or otherwise, is not to gain an immediate smashing victory but rather to enhance the relative power position of the weaker at the expense of the stronger. The parallel to a game of chess is unmistakable. White's disadvantage is black's advantage. Poker players, as we are in the West, always hoping for the lucky draw, are helpless before it.

Of course, there are those who would say that Soviet technology has so developed in recent years that we have become the weaker in this life-and-death game. In my opinion this is too extreme a view; on balance the West still appears to be the stronger. Even if we have lost ground, we have definitely not lost the power of enormous, possibly fatal, retaliation. And one cardinal principle of Communist operational doctrine is well understood: the Soviet Union, the base of the world revolution, must not be risked in the pursuit of any one objective. Thus the problem of Communist strategists is now (as it was in the departed days of decisive U.S. nuclear superiority): how can the greatest freedom of maneuver be maintained, so that power and space may be gradually amassed without the risk of being plunged into a full-scale atomic war?

Protracted conflict is the obvious answer. A strategy of limited actions, of indirect threats, it is also one in which no single move constitutes adequate provocation for the unleashing of the West's engines of nuclear destruction. And for its success it relies most heavily on our fears that any introduction of such weapons would surely produce a global chain reaction. Because Western strategy has been mainly predicated on the concept that war, if it comes, will be total in character, involving maximum violence, we are still ill-equipped to meet the diffuse and dangerous challenges offered by that form of conflict at which the men in Moscow and Peiping are most proficient.

A brief, backward look at the Korean War is instructive in a discussion of the Communist piecemeal strategy. In June, 1950, the Soviets, testing the firmness of U.S. intentions in the Far East, acted indirectly by manipulating the puppet regime of North Korea to launch an attack on its neighbor to the south. They then parried the affirmative American response which followed by inducing the Communist Chinese to enter the war, doubtless by persuading them that here was their golden opportunity to establish themselves as a major power. Even after 1950 the U.S. was inclined to think that the war in Korea was still *over* Korea, with the additional feature of Chinese intervention superimposed. A mental block obscured the fact that this was now a conflict between Communist China and the West, which refused to extend operations even after the meaning of the war itself had been extended. The chief fear was that an expansion of the theater of action (by air-raids on Chinese bases north of the Yalu) and of the weapons system (by the use of tactical nuclear arms) might have sparked the Soviets into action and brought on a general war. There is good reason now to conclude that the West's fear was more emotional than logical. However they bluster, the Soviets seem manifestly reluctant to leap into an all-out fight. At any rate, the West failed in Korea to revise its strategy to meet the new situation.

There are other examples. Also in Asia, the conquest of Indochina constitutes a striking example of Communist ingenuity and energy.

There, following hard on Korea, a modern mechanized French military machine, numbering more than half a million troops and backed by practically unlimited conventional war supplies from the U.S., was less defeated than neutralized in a rapid culmination of events that startled the world, reoriented the thinking of numerous opportunistic Easterners and brought a perjured peace in which a nation was bisected in a ceremony humiliating to the West at Geneva in 1954.

The conflict in Indochina was a convincing demonstration of the versatility of Red strategists simultaneously employing the various weapons of protracted warfare on two continents. In Europe, especially in France, the tools were political pressure, intrigue, propaganda and economic strife. And in the actual target area the instances were rare that the Communists made attempts to match military muscle with the French. Yet when the situation was ripe and the battle was all but won by an eight-year campaign of subversion, terror and guerrilla warfare, a conventional but resounding military triumph was engineered at Dienbienphu to complete the discomfiture of the West and to pave the way for new conflicts of the protracted war.

Study of the historical development of U.S. and Western attitudes toward war is enlightening because it reveals the wellsprings of the general concept which today permits the depredations of protracted conflict. In general, the Western tradition, until the latter part of the nineteenth century, vindicated the use of force to defend the moral order. And at the same time it emphasized that there must be limitations of warfare for ethical reasons. For example, the non-military or purely civilian components of the warring societies were to be protected against direct assaults.

But at the level of intellectual theory, the concept of war in the mind of the West has suffered a schizophrenic split. In one ideological extreme there has been a gradual tendency to exalt power and war until they become exciting ends in themselves. By World War II a

succession of theorists stretching as far back as Machiavelli in the sixteenth century had helped prepare the way for an almost unquestioning faith in a series of decisive, crushing sledge-hammer blows as the surest way to a strategic victory. But on the other ideological extreme there has been a tendency to become so skeptical about war that peace and the total abolition of force from the international scene become ends in themselves.

The competition of the total war advocates and the total peace advocates for the allegiance of the Western mind has helped prepare that mind to take it for granted that the issue today is total nuclear war or some state of non-violent suspension which masquerades as peace. Especially since August, 1945, when the atomic age was ushered in over Hiroshima, it has been difficult for Western man to imagine how another war involving major powers could possibly be anything but a push-button affair in which the atmosphere over the combating nations would be instantly and indiscriminately speckled with mushroom clouds. The idea of conflict, involving limited stakes and less apocalyptic means, became as meaningless to the twentieth century Americans as the idea of total war, involving whole populations, would have been to a twelfth-century knight.

The undesirable status quo

"We both fear war," Stalin is reported to have said to a high-ranking Western diplomat. "But you fear it more than we do." Precisely this fear of total war, or rather the belief that it is but one of two alternatives, is the motivation of much of Western policy. It is the reason we most often tend to sidle forward to meet each new Communist thrust, the reason why, in the ever-briefer periods of relative quiet, we strive only to maintain an often undesirable *status quo*. It thwarts all initiative and makes it almost unthinkable, even in the minds of U.S. statesmen and prominent military planners, that we can undertake limited offensives without the certain risk of absolute war. The Communists are not similarly inhibited.

The roots of present-day Soviet concepts of conflict do not go much farther back in time than the nineteenth century. On the other hand, Chinese ideas, which today are virtually the same as their partner's, are founded in the ancient writings of the military writer, Sun Tzu, who lived during the sixth century, B.C. Sun Tzu is of particular importance because he foreshadowed the modern Chinese concept of protracted conflict when he made the simple suggestion that it is most advantageous to defeat the enemy without doing battle. Central to his teaching was the principle that the most effective strategy should either avoid the use of force altogether, or that one should employ force only to consummate a victory already won in political, moral, espionage, logistic and territorial terms. Under no circumstances should an enemy be faced with annihilation: such an enemy would fight to the utmost and inflict more damage on the victor than the annihilation of his forces would be worth. At any given point the enemy should be allowed to retreat to a position of further disadvantage. Successive retreats to worse and worse positions would end in the final loss of the enemy's military effectiveness.

Mao Tse-tung is a student of Sun Tzu, fond of uttering such aphorisms from the master as: "Know your enemy and know yourself," "Avoid the enemy when he is full of dash, and strike him when he withdraws exhausted," and, "Make a noise in the east, but strike in the west." There can be no doubt that the roots of Mao's thoughts are deep in China's past.

In the mid-twenties Mao dedicated himself and his then few followers to an unending war for power whose final outcome even he did not pretend to know. He preached war for its own sake as a means of furthering the revolution. "To learn warfare through warfare," he declares, "this is our chief method." And Mao has never been afraid that prolonged warfare might sap the moral courage of his people. On the contrary, he says: "In the course of such a long and ruthless war, the Chinese people will receive excellent steeling."

Mao is the world's leading opponent of the concept of calculated warfare. "A military expert," he has written, "cannot expect victory in war by going beyond the limits imposed by material conditions, but within these limits he can and must fight to win." He firmly believes that when a weaker power is engaged in a struggle with a stronger, protracted warfare is the only way in which the weaker can move toward ultimate victory. It is the central principle of his strategy. By limiting the scope of the action and keeping its tempos perfectly under control the victory may finally be won. And the greater the disparity and the strengths of the antagonists, the longer



"I could always marry a smart woman like you did"

must be the range of view which the weaker side adopts in its planning.

Mao constantly warns against military adventurism and makes it clear the objective of war is not only to annihilate the enemy but to preserve one's self. In the Korean War he always kept open the avenues of retreat in the event the U.S. showed any inclination to strike at the source of Chinese Communist power. War is seen not as a destroyer, as the Western nations view it, but as a creator of strength. Using this notion of protracted conflict, Chinese Communist military and political forces have often won against overwhelming odds (particularly over the Japanese and the forces of Chiang Kai-shek) by maintaining a consistent and cumulative process of attack, pretense of attack, retreat and renewed attack.

The elements of the indirect Chinese approach fit very well into Soviet thinking. The doctrine of the war of attrition has been adopted by many Communist leaders, beginning with Marx and Engels, and subsequently Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin. Soviet Communists see the world revolution essentially as a gigantic war of attrition which will last a hundred years or so, a war undertaken for the purpose not only of destroying individual forces of the capitalist nations, but also of changing the whole structure of capitalist society. Consequently, Communist forces should avoid all-out engagements except when they have an impressive tactical superiority. One Bolshevik doctrine postulates that even the weakest and smallest forces can make a definite contribution and that in conflict all available forces should be used in some way, without, however, exposing the main strength to extreme risks. Thus the numerically small Communist Party in Iraq, playing on the shadow of Soviet power to the north, contributed substantially to the 1958 *coup d'état* in Baghdad and now appears to be well on the way to far greater power.

Lenin contributed much to the growing strategic consciousness of communism and stressed particularly the need for fitting its entire organization and all methods to the single objective of conquest. As Mao is of Sun Tzu, Lenin was a great admirer of Clausewitz, the celebrated German military theoretician who once said: "War is a continuation of politics by other means." Wrote Lenin, speaking of Clausewitz: "This writer, whose fundamental ideas have become an undoubted acquisition for all thinking people, eighty years ago combated the Philistine and ignorant prejudice that war can be separated from the politics of the respective governments, the respective classes; that war at any time can be regarded simply as aggression, which disturbs the peace, followed by restoration of the peace. As much as to say: 'People quarreled and then made up!' This is a crude and ignorant opinion, refuted scores of years ago, and refuted now by a more or less careful analysis of any historical epoch of war."

"The soundest strategy in war"

From his studies of Clausewitz, Lenin finally developed a definition of strategy which epitomizes the central concept of protracted war: "The soundest strategy in war is to postpone operations until the moral disintegration of the enemy renders the delivery of the mortal blow both possible and easy."

The memory of Lenin's fearsome successor, Joseph Stalin, is far from sacred in Russia today. Yet his operational theories have not been rendered obsolete by the ruthless downgrading process which has gone on since 1953. The basic conflict doctrine is not substantially affected by personality changes within the Soviet structure. The unlamented Stalin's works serve to illustrate only more concretely the methodically planned opportunism of the Communists. Witness his pact with Hitler in 1939. And it was Stalin who adopted the older Russian methods of extended strategy, in which indirect means, such as bribery, espionage and subterfuge, are preferred to direct military ventures outside the homeland. Stalin prophesied in 1925 that, through a situation of gradual "socialist encirclement," the capitalist states "will consider it expedient 'voluntarily' to make substantial concessions to the proletariat." The Communist tune of world domination through protracted conflict does not change, no matter which leader plays it.

With the advent of nuclear weapons, the U.S. has emerged as the chief opponent of communism. The world cannot be won for bolshevism until the U.S. has been disarmed and destroyed as a political entity. To this end the Soviets and their partners have bent every effort in the past decade and a half, at the same time putting forth a truly gigantic effort to overcome our atomic lead. Not only have they caught up with us in weapons technology, they have

materially advanced Stalin's "socialist encirclement" all over the globe. And, simultaneously, they have avoided the ultimate showdown. All of their provocations in Europe, such as the Berlin Blockade, were conceived within the framework of a piecemeal strategy. In Korea and Indochina the U.S.S.R. has been able to exploit the blindly legalistic attitudes of the Western nations toward conflict to evade responsibility for actions which have been controlled from Moscow, and thereby to escape the danger of a major war. Even in the Middle East, where up to present years Russia had obtained no real influence, the Communists have accumulated masked but important power by the simple expedient of promoting unrest in an area where we are futilely resisting the irresistible forces of exploding nationalism. The protracted conflict battle lines are everywhere.

The Communist doctrine of conflict, then, synthesizes all the techniques which history has proved to be workable, everything from persuasion through coercion to the most modern forms of military warfare. While some of the doctrine's central concepts have been kept secret, a study of the record over the past half century clarifies the aims as well as the methods of the Communists. These seem to be: 1) undermining anti-Communist morale; 2) disrupting the social and economic structure of non-Communist nations; 3) weakening their military capabilities; 4) infiltrating and disrupting their institutions and organizations; 5) causing them to make false political and strategic decisions; 6) cultivating an unreal sense of security abroad; 7) creating local disaffections and internal crises which might induce a nation to acquiesce in a Communist "solution." Concurrently with all these, the Communists strive to build up both their technological and military positions. They do not place their reliance most heavily in any single aspect of this doctrine. Their real skill lies in their ability to vary the combinations in any given situation.

In time, the Communists are confident they can find ways to exploit any set of conditions to their own advantage. And their task is made simpler by virtue of the fact that the independent policies



"I'd like to try on a pipe"

of their enemies are rarely co-ordinated. This condition enabled the Communists to divide the West in the postwar decade by starting peripheral wars in three different areas, none of which was a focal point of the interests of all three major Western allies. The French were kept busy in Indochina, the British by the risings in Malaya and the United States by aggression in Korea. The Communists are masters at the organized promotion of orchestrated crisis.

And the struggle need not always be based on violence, which is rarely sufficient unto itself and indeed is sometimes unnecessary. Violence must always be preceded, accompanied by and followed with non-violent conflict techniques, such as agitation, propaganda, infiltration and political sabotage. This not only renders the violence less risky, it makes it more effective.

Ethics-in-reverse concept of conflict

Essentially, the entire Communist concept of conflict boils down to a crystalline-hard summation. Gain strength by weakening your opponent; do unto your opponent exactly the opposite of what you want him to do unto you. This code calls for no moral indignation, as we of the West seem to need before we can take positive action. It simply involves a kind of ethics-in-reverse that has maddened us, addled us and left us apparently powerless to do anything appropriate about it. In short, protracted conflict is working precisely according to plan.

What can we expect in the future? Barring a technological breakthrough as momentous as the atomic bomb, it is virtually certain that the Communists will continue to prefer the indirect approach rather than risk a sudden life-and-death engagement. The Soviets will likely persist in acting by proxy instead of directly confronting the U.S. The East Germans, for instance, will be acting for Khrushchev if there is a showdown in the current Berlin crisis, in spite of the Russians' snarls and missile rattling. China, the lean and hungry brother, will maintain the pressure on Formosa and the offshore islands. If more trouble comes in the Middle East it may be stirred up by Afghanistan or Iraq. If it continues in North Africa, it will be quarterbacked by Egypt, a nation, which, incidentally, might well beware of indirect Communist assaults which could damage its ambitions. Meanwhile, the U.S.S.R. will remain free of military entanglements to become more active in the political, economic and psychological penetration of South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America.

The gradual Communist build-up not only minimizes the chances of decisive counteraction, it is also conducive to temporizing on the part of the West. If the U.S. does come into conflict, the Communist theory goes, it will come in tentatively, furnishing aid "too little and too late."

The Communists will probably be reluctant to undertake forceful expansion in a direction which would prove offensive to neutralist nations like India as long as these neutralists serve useful purposes and other targets are available. This means that area of potential military conflict in the foreseeable future may be limited. There is a high probability that, if any treaty partner of the U.S. is chosen as a target, the Communists will carefully avoid anything that looks like conventional war. Instead, they will instigate rebellion and civil insurrection against those governments so that U.S. support could be labeled "intervention," such as happened recently in Lebanon. Tacit Soviet backing of Arab nationalism, for example, represents an almost ideal embodiment of Communist conflict doctrine in the nuclear age.

The instruments of terror

The forecast is unmistakably grim. And it is rendered still more grim by the knowledge that the weapons for utterly concluding the conflict, should the moment ripen sufficiently or desperation demand it, are firmly in Soviet hands. Especially in the past year, with their Sputnik and Lunik achievements, Russian arrogance has increased. While U.S.S.R. scientists at Geneva in 1957 were willing to discuss the technical problems of nuclear controls, such as the means of identifying and locating nuclear tests, it is reported that this past fall they dwelt mostly on the political aspects of test-control procedure. Clearly they seem less interested in even pretending to want an agreement. At the very best, nuclear weapons and operational intercontinental ballistics missiles are persuasive instruments of terror in the protracted conflict.

The great dilemma, unquestionably the most critical of this or any

other age, remains: What can we do about it? How, within the framework of our Western traditions and ethics, can we save ourselves? It is not enough to say that we should have broadened the scope of our military activities against the Chinese in Korea in 1950, that we should have protested more vigorously the Czechoslovakian arms shipment to Egypt in 1955, that we should have immediately recognized the Nagy Government in Hungary in 1956, that we should have done any number of things differently in the past. Actually, in the most recent past, our conduct of foreign affairs in crisis has been encouragingly affirmative. We moved to stabilize the failing situation in Lebanon. In the face of an anxious and ill-informed public opinion, we served sharp and apparently startling notice on the Chinese concerning the firmness of our intentions to support our Chinese Nationalist allies on Quemoy. And neither the U.S. nor its NATO allies have flinched in the face of current Soviet threats of dire consequences if we don't pull out of Berlin.

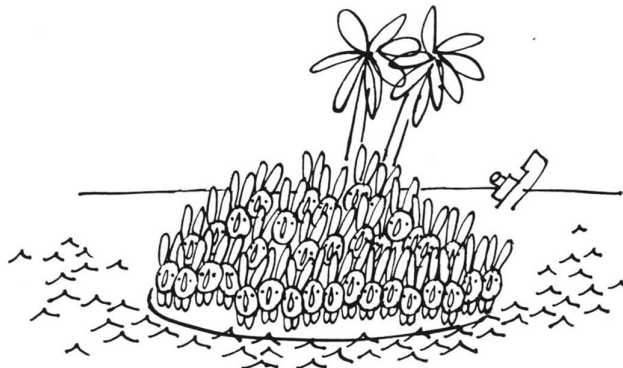
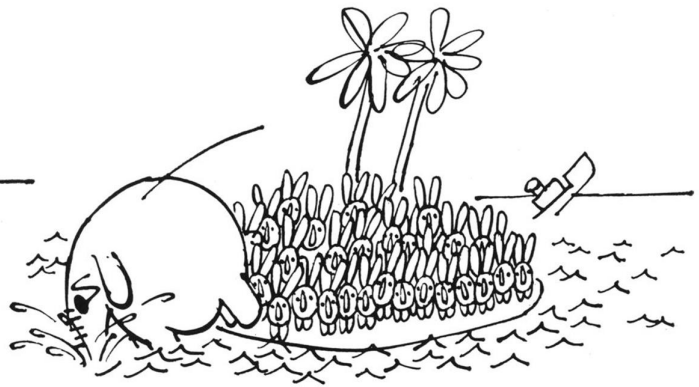
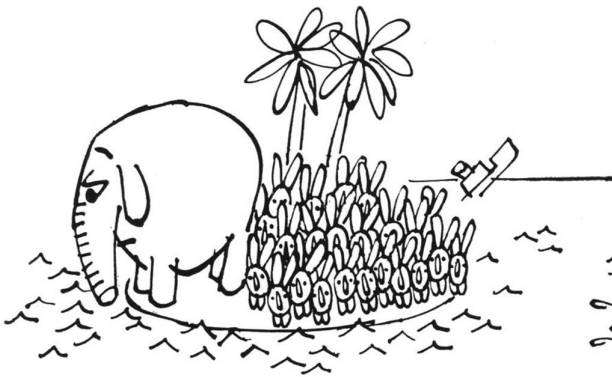
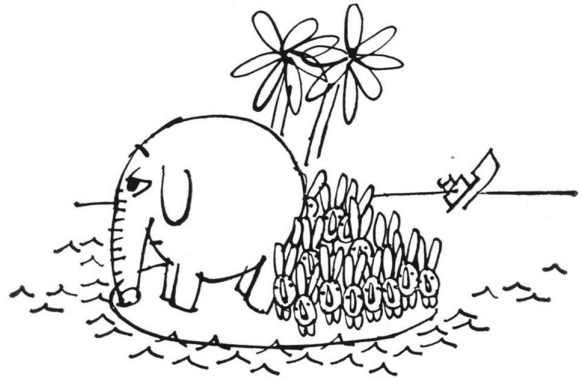
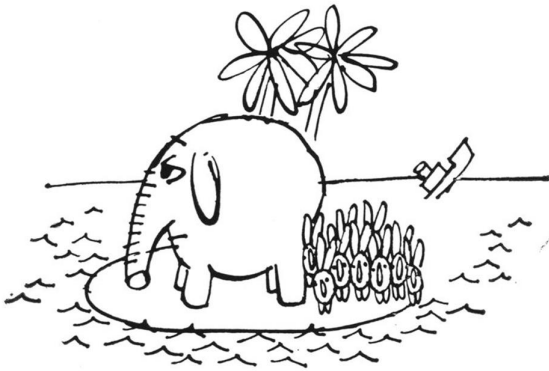
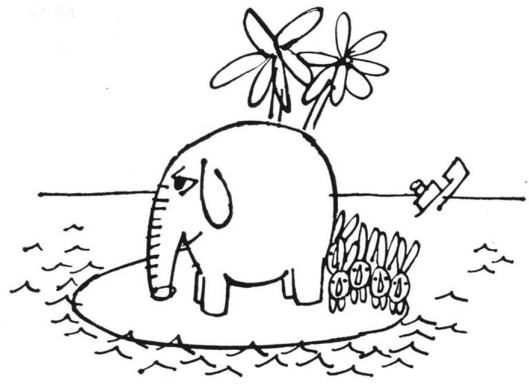
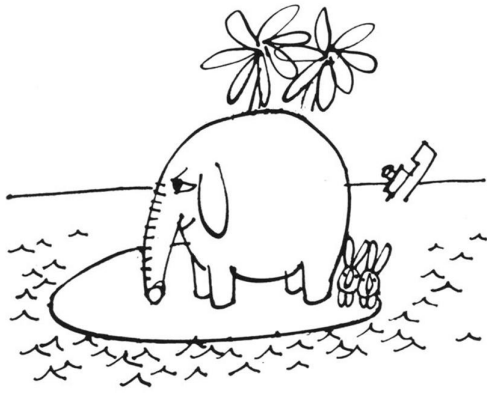
But, encouraging as these recent moves have been, they are still only countermoves against Communist or Communist-inspired aggression. We must continue certainly to *react* to present danger. Much more than that, however, we must learn to *act*, to seize an initiative that is now never ours. To cope with future dangers, the U.S. needs to develop its own concept for dealing with continuous conflict, not, to be sure, one so cynically aggrandizing as the Communists', but one in which our vital interests would be forwarded as well as protected. And to do this we must be very sure we know exactly what our interests are. We must develop a clear sense of national purpose, and act on it, not defensively but positively in the sure knowledge of our convictions.

We must, of course, always counter Communist moves with moves of our own, preferably with actions that will then force them to take the defensive. Naturally we must continue to nurture our treaty system and hold, with our allies, the strong ring of deterrent outposts around the world. But our total concept, like the Communists', could have many avenues of expression. To begin with, all the signs indicate that the time is now ripe for a really massive ideological assault against the vulnerable roots of Communist power. The subjects of rigid totalitarianism are by no means content. Reports coming out of China bespeak the misery of hundreds of millions in the communes. The Hungarian revolt certainly marked the end of whatever enchantment the great majority of the satellite peoples had felt for the benefits of Soviet leadership. In Russia itself, the coercive attacks brought to bear on the author, Boris Pasternak, prove that the Soviets have so little confidence in the spontaneous support of their unalterable rightness.

Stressing the flaws in their system

We should search for methods to convert this obvious popular readiness to our purpose. It costs the Russians more at the present time, for example, to jam radio transmissions coming from outside the Iron-Curtain area than it costs us to run the entire U.S.I.A. operation. We should double it across the board. Instead of extolling the American system and the wonders of life in Oshkosh, we should promote freedom in ways that are understandable to the captive peoples; i.e., in terms of basic human values, we should illuminate for these people the great flaws in the system which controls them. In whatever ways are both practicable and compatible with our own aims, we need to prosecute this ideological campaign and pierce the barriers of thought control.

Not long ago, a colleague and I, traveling under the auspices of the State and Defense Departments, visited some thirty U.S. foreign missions in countries all around the Sino-Soviet periphery. Our job was to gather material for a full study of the Communist strategy of protracted warfare, and we wanted to know exactly what Communist methods were currently being used in those places. We customarily held informal discussion periods at each of the missions visited, and we gathered a great deal of valuable information. But the response we got from some U.S. foreign officers as we attempted to clarify our views on the over-all problem was even more heartening than the information we received. After each session, there were invariably those men who, stimulated by a new understanding of the problem and the glimmerings of a fresh way to combat it, stayed long into the night to talk eagerly about it all. These Americans have their counterparts in every country threatened by the convulsive crisis of our time. In their comprehension of the enemy's strategy lies our best chance to thwart his plan of conquest. ##



LOOMYERS

MAY, 1959

PRICE 60¢

Esquire

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